Supervisors' Perspectives on Graduate Students' Problems in Academic Writing

Omar Moh'd Amer Hawari[*] ID
Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University,
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Yasser Al-Shboul ID
Al-Balqa Applied University, JORDAN

Ibrahim Fathi Huwari ID
Zarqa University, JORDAN

Abstract: Writing is very important for learners; it is a dynamic and creative skill. Although studies on students' problems when writing a dissertation among Native Speakers (NS) are widely done, studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are limited, especially those which examine problems faced while writing dissertations among Ph.D. EFL learners, in particular, Jordanian Ph.D. candidates. Studies on the supervisors' perspectives of writing a dissertation are scarce among EFL learners, particularly Arab learners. This study aims at focusing on supervisors' perspectives of writing dissertations among Jordanian Ph.D. students who are studying abroad. This study is a qualitative case study. The researchers interviewed nine Malaysian supervisors who supervised 21 Jordanian Ph.D. candidates. The results show that six main themes emerged from the supervisors' perspectives, and they are grammatical mistakes, lack of vocabulary and verbs reporting, personal effects, lack of motivation, writing apprehension, and the problem with generic thesis structure. This paper contributes with a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical perspectives on problems Ph.D. students face when writing a dissertation. The study also fills in the gap in the field of supervisors' perspectives of writing a dissertation. Based on the results found, the researchers suggest a number of recommendations and further research that might help supervisors understand the reasons behind such difficulties.

Keywords: *Error analysis, Jordanian Ph.D. students, writing dissertations, written feedback.*

Introduction

Language skills are divided into four categories: writing, reading, listening, and speaking (Huwari & Hashima, 2011). Writing is considered the most problematic issue for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, because it is a complicated skill, (Abu Shawish & Abdelraheem, 2010; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; and Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). Writing in English is tough for both ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL students, since it is a skill that necessitates mental effort to construct solid and complete sentences (Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2015).

With different stages of learning, especially the postgraduate Ph.D. Level, writing becomes harder than it is at the undergraduate level (Swales, 2004). Such difficulties at the Ph.D. level encourage researchers to investigate linguistic factors that cause these difficulties (Dong, 1998; Riazi, 1997). Writing problems are also faced by Jordanian students at both levels, undergraduate and postgraduate (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Al-Khuwaileh & Shoumali, 2000; Almatarneh, et al., 2018; Al-Gublan, 2015; Huwari & Al-Shboul, 2016). Students have difficulty expressing and integrating ideas, they struggle with cohesion and coherence, and the connectivity between phrases, paragraphs, or sections, especially at the Ph.D. level (Gulfidan, 2009; Manjet, 2015). The importance of writing a thesis or dissertation cannot be overstated. As a result, the problems of writing a dissertation are examined in this study.

Students may have difficulty writing a Ph.D. dissertation due to a lack of basic knowledge of the dissertation genre and its components, such as the literature review, according to Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006). Students, for example, frequently scribble irrelevant information in the literature and fail to write a dissertation. They do not respect the time that supervisors devote to providing feedback, and they are unaware of the supervisors' responsibilities (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006).

According to studies such as Alavi and Mansor (2011), the most difficult qualities of Ph.D. writers are educational background, grammar, and cultural differences, which may create melancholy, loneliness, and isolation. Hyland (2019)

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[*]**Corresponding author:**
Omar Moh'd Amer Hawari, College of Sciences and Humanities at AL-Aflaj, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia.
✉ o.huwari@psau.edu.sa

claims that non-native English learners believe that "editors and reviewers are prejudiced against them for any non-standard language practices." Non-native researchers are concerned that they will be rejected because of their country of origin.

According to Al-Zubaidi and Richards (2010), Arab students in Malaysia lack English abilities because their first language is Arabic, and they do not have the opportunity to utilize English in their home countries. Almatarneh et al. (2018) discovered that Arab students in Malaysia struggled with academic writing. This is similar to Al-Khasawneh's (2010) study at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) on Arab students; the researcher interviewed ten Arab postgraduate students to investigate the difficulties that students may face through their academic writing. He noticed that Arab students have difficulty with academic writing. Another study on the same setting (UUM) conducted by Jomaa and Bidin (2019) reveals that Arab postgraduate students, especially Jordanian students, have difficulty utilizing citations in their Ph.D. theses, resulting in a poorly written thesis. According to the same researchers, Jomaa and Bidin (2017), Arab Ph.D. students have difficulty in their academic work due to their insufficient grasp of the foreign language. Based on those findings, this study seeks the supervisors' perspectives on Jordanian Ph.D. students' writing. This work's researchers were also students at UUM, they were close with the supervisors, and it was relatively easy to contact the supervisors to obtain their perspectives on students' writing.

According to the early observations made by the researchers of this study, Jordanian Ph.D. candidates at UUM have difficulty writing their Ph.D. thesis in English. They have low confidence in English writing due to poor educational background and self-efficacy beliefs, which means that they do not believe and trust their ability to succeed at the end of the Ph.D. journey by writing a qualified dissertation (Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012; Huwari, 2014). This preliminary finding is congruent with the study of Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012). They found that Jordanian students in Malaysia are more apprehensive when they write in English, so that they would delay their work and complain about their difficulties in writing (Muhaisen & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2012).

Most of the error analysis research has been conducted on local students. This research is conducted on overseas Jordanian students who are pursuing Ph.D., which makes it more significant; because there is no research up to date focusing on such students abroad. This research also fills the gap of the supervisor's perspective on the Jordanian Ph.D. students' problems during writing their dissertation. Discovering the supervisors' perspectives of the student's writing would increase our understanding of the writing problems faced by Jordanian candidates. This study would help students to be conscious of the supervisors' interests and comments. By exploring supervisors' views on Jordanian Ph.D. candidates writing in UUM, the students may be able to decrease their mistakes in writing by following the supervisors' guidance. This research is essential to fill up the gap of the research study. Although studies on the problems native students face in writing a dissertation are widely done, such studies on Jordanian students are limited. Based on the researchers' knowledge through the literature, there is no research examining the supervisors' perspective on the participants of this study in writing a dissertation.

Research Objective

The purpose of this paper is to do a qualitative analysis of the supervisor's perspectives of Jordanian Ph.D. students' problems when writing their dissertations. In order to achieve this goal, the work is divided into four sections: research review, research design, results, and conclusion of the paper. Through analyzing both methods, the paper gives supervisors a deeper understanding of the problem.

Literature Review

The strategies used in the discipline of writing are planning, drafting, editing, and revising. In order to produce well-written paragraphs, people have to follow numerous stages. Accordingly, Robinson and Modrey (1986, p. xi) argue that "writing is a process. Writing is not an activity accomplished in one setting". Thus, it has been observed that the process of writing is a difficult job which is attributed to the different forms of writing and the high standard requirement every writer needs to take into his considerations. Although writing efficiently can lead to productive academic outcomes (Mousavi & Kashefian-Naeeini, 2011), many students believe that writing a thesis is not an easy task (Krauss & Ismail, 2010). According to Dong (1998), a thesis, or a dissertation, is a type of research-process genre with "demanding intellectual and rhetorical tasks", and that is a challenging task due to the size of the document needed and the quality of writing.

In another study, Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) examined the difficulties in writing a thesis among ESL postgraduate students. An in-depth interview is used to obtain data from supervisors and their students using a comparative method. More specifically, the researchers of this study have looked at the difficulties that students made in writing the results and discussion sections. There are differences in both perceptions on writing difficulties. Supervisors' perception of these difficulties is appeared in the standards, the style used for writing a thesis. In other perceptions, the writing problems are attributed to the students' limited English proficiency. These findings would be helpful as they highlight the significance of modeling that help students comprehend the requirements of writing

different parts of a thesis. Hence, the present study aims to highlight the problems made by Jordanian Ph.D. students from supervisors' perspectives.

Armstrong (2004) declares that almost half of the students are unable to complete writing their dissertation, which is attributed to three different factors of personality, professionalism, and organization. Example on the personality factor includes interpersonal differences in language and work style. The professional factor is viewed in ignorant students and less research interest given, and students' responsibilities and inadequate departmental provisions are examples of organizational factors (Grant & Graham, 1999). In similar statistics in the UK, out of 1,969 candidates, 46% withdrew because of the same factors classified by (Grant & Graham, 1999). Likewise, North America shared a close percentage with the UK; as it has been found that 50% of Ph.D. students failed to complete their Ph.D. dissertations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Alfehaid (2017), for example, examined the writing difficulties among Saudi doctoral candidates in the UK. The data were collected using two instruments: the open-ended survey and interviews. Sixty-one Saudi doctoral candidates pursuing their studies at different UK universities participated in the study. Six students and their supervisors were then interviewed. Results show that the development of students' dissertation writing is mainly obstructed by the academic language, such as being active participants in academic groups of practice.

Huwari et al. (2017) investigated the errors made by postgraduate students majoring in English at Yarmouk University. They looked into the mistakes made by students of master's programs of English when writing their master's thesis. The data were collected from nine Jordanian master theses of English language. The researcher analyzed the comments given by the supervisors on these nine Jordanian master's theses. Generally speaking, the results reveal that the students' errors are classified under one or more of the following three categories: coherence problems, mechanism of writing problems, and problems with organizing the thesis. In this study, the researchers try to compare the errors made by students of a different level, such as the Ph.D. level.

According to other researches, international doctorate candidates may confront significant hurdles during their Ph.D. degree. For example, Bireda (2015) discovered that among doctorate candidates, the most common concerns are low motivation, tension, anxiety, the student-supervisor connection, the educational system, and so on. Furthermore, candidates confront problems relating to the job process, expertise, and resources available (Pyhältö et al., 2012). Mouton (2001) also discovered that applicants experience difficulty in developing academic skills such as research methodologies and time management, as well as financial issues that influence their studies, job, and life in general (Boyce et al., 2016; Huwari, 2020; Walton et al., 2019). Postgraduate students may also suffer owing to cultural differences (Alavi & Mansor, 2011); as a consequence, they may experience unpleasant sentiments such as despair, loneliness, isolation, and so on (Janta et al., 2014). Casanave and Hubbard (1992) studied the problem faced by L2 doctoral dissertation students. The participants of the study included 85 supervisors who were recruited from 28 departments at Stanford University. The results showed that compared to a native speaker of English, L2 students made more errors in their writing. These errors appeared clearly at the sentence level more than at the paragraph level, including the appropriateness of selecting vocabulary, the accuracy of grammar, comprehension, and accuracy of spelling and punctuation.

To sum up, L2 postgraduate students, who participated in the studies reviewed above, faced many difficulties at both sentence and paragraph levels. They also had difficulties in understanding the requirements of the dissertation genre. Besides, L2 postgraduate students varied in their writing difficulties when the different sections of the dissertation are concerned. Hence, some sections are more challenging to write compared to others.

Methodology

A qualitative case study is used to allow the researchers realize the supervisors' perspectives of Jordanian Ph.D. candidates when writing dissertations as described and experienced by the supervisor during their supervision. According to Creswell (2012), the researcher depends mainly on the student's views by asking broad and general questions. Moreover, the type of data is mainly based on words (or text) from participant students. Finally, the researchers analyze this text into topics and run it.

Participants

Nine supervisors, supervising 21 Jordanian Ph.D. students in UUM are the participants. The researchers are familiar with the environment around the students, because the researchers studied in the same university. In this matter, Bauer and Gaskell (2000) state that different factors would affect the number of the interviewers, such as the nature of the topic of research, the available resources, and the number of relevant contexts. Other researchers such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Guba (1978), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue that saturation or redundancy reached determines the number of participants needed for the interview. In the present study, the researchers reached the data saturation by making seven interviewers with the supervisor. Nevertheless, two more supervisors were interviewed by the researchers to ensure that there is no new or additional information that could be gained from the supervisors.

Information about the Supervisors

Nine supervisors, who supervised 21 Jordanian Ph.D. candidates at UUM, are interviewed in this study. The supervisors, whose ages ranged between 40-60 years old, are interviewed by the researchers of the present study. Table 1 below shows general information about the supervisors. The supervisors' include four females and five males. As the supervisors' origin is concerned, seven supervisors were original Malays, and the rest were Chinese Malays. Although their professional experience varied, ten years of teaching experience at UUM was the least professional experience except for one supervisor with only three years of teaching experience at UUM. The highest experience is 23 years. The average number of students they supervised was between 3 and 15 Ph.D. candidates. Students who have already graduated range from 1 to 7 students, supervised by the first seven supervisors; the other two supervisors declared that none of their candidates had graduated yet. See Table 1.

Table 1. Information About the Supervisors

Supervisor	Experience	Supervisee(s)	Graduated Ph.D. students
1	23 years in UUM	6 PhD students	1
2	22 years in UUM	14 PhD students	3
3	3 years in UUM	9 PhD students	7
4	22 years in UUM	5 PhD students	None
5	12 years in UUM	4 PhD students	1
6	14 years in UUM	15 PhD students	3
7	16 years in UUM	8 PhD students	2
8	10 years in UUM	7 PhD students	2
9	16 years in UUM	3 PhD students	None

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview is used in this study with the nine supervisors in the first semester of 2011-2012. This data collection instrument is used to highlight points to be asked of the supervisors. According to Fontana and Frey (2000), the semi-structured interview is seen as "one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 645). The researchers listened well to the participants during the interview. These interviews were divided into two main sessions. The first one was held at the end of 2011 where the supervisors were available and had free time because they were not involved in teaching activities. While 5 out of 9 supervisors agreed that their interviews to be tape-recorded, the researchers needed to take notes during the interview sessions. Twenty minutes to thirty-five minutes is the average length of the interviews that results in two hours of conversations. These interviews were classified under two main categories: personal information and interview questions. In the first type, the researchers propose some questions focusing on the supervisors' own information such as age, gender, nationality, teaching experiences, the students that they currently supervised, and those who have graduated. Regarding the second part of the interview session, and to answer the research question of the present study, the researchers designed and adapted the interview questions from Gurel (2010).

1- From your perspective, do students prefer to write in English or their mother tongue? And why?

2- Based on your experience while supervising, what are the challenges that you faced with the Ph.D. candidates?

3- Based on your experience while supervising, what is the most difficult part your students face in writing their dissertation? And why?

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, data is analyzed following verbatim transcription. The verbatim data obtained from the supervisors are used as evidence of the problems in writing. The researchers analyzed each supervisor's perspective on the issue. Moreover, data is organized and analyzed using two appropriate strategies of manual analysis strategy and basic computer program (office word process).

Manual Analysis Strategy

Creswell (2012) stated that the qualitative strategy of indicates that the researcher has read, marked by hand, and divided the data into sections. The present study researchers used this technique (manual analysis strategy) because they found a small number of databases represented in almost less than 500 pages of transcripts. This simply helps to locate text passages and keep track of files. Moreover, the researchers aimed to avoid the intrusion of the machine and have a hands-on feel for data. In order to be familiar with the data collected, the researchers transcribed all the interviews. With this respect, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that the transcribing process helps the researcher to be familiar with the data. When the verbatim transcription of the interview is concerned, the researchers of this study followed these steps. First, the researchers played the tape recording and listened to it carefully concerning the

interview guide questions. Second, they wrote on a clean sheet of paper the exact words made by the participants when they had to express their views. When needed, the researchers rewind the tapes to find the exact data. Finally, the researchers play beck the tapes to check the results.

Office Word Process and Coding

Once the researchers have completed the verbatim transcriptions, they used a computer and Word document to type and print the transferred data obtained from the recordings. Additionally, they organized the interviews by creating Microsoft Word files. These documents are kept on the researchers' computer and are accessed by them only. Analysis of context meaning is the approach followed by the researchers for analyzing and coding the description. Hence, they began their analysis by coding the meanings, not sentence by sentence.

As the researcher codes the data, the second phase occurs. To get the themes, the researcher separates the data into small chunks and labels the text. In the present study, the researchers followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) coding tool. The researchers began coding with two interview transcripts, one with a lot of information and the other with a lot less. Furthermore, by bringing rich subjects to the challenges linked with writing, these transcripts made a contribution. The researchers scan the transcript to provide the initial themes, and then the researchers applied these themes to other manuscripts. The transcriptions are carefully read, and each participant's response was read line-by-line to get the themes. In the last stage, data saturation was reached by the researchers at the 7th interview. The researchers conducted two extra interviews to make sure that no more themes come out.

Finally, the researchers of this study have discussed with some of the participants "supervisors" about the themes which were emerged from the data. Supervisors have agreed on major themes in this study. As the researchers of this study have graduated from the same university "UUM" in Malaysia, so that they are closed with the supervisors, and it is quite easy to contact them personally.

Findings / Results

The objective of this study is to explore the supervisors' perspectives of Jordanian Ph.D. candidates' problems when writing their dissertation. The supervisors' declarations and comments about the problems that Jordanian Ph.D. students face in their writing are related to the style of writing, grammatical mistakes, social effects, motivation, weakness in writing a dissertation, and anxiety.

Grammatical Mistakes

Errors, such as misusing modifiers and verb tense in a sentence, are referred to as grammatical mistakes. In terms of grammatical mistakes, it highlighted the supervisors' perspectives of their supervisees' writing. Supervisors reported that Jordanian Ph.D. candidates showed difficulty with syntax, lack of vocabulary, employing reporting verbs, and consistency. For instance, supervisor 6 commented that the students made many grammatical mistakes, and the student himself agreed about his grammar weakness. He said:

> *My Jordanian student had made many grammatical mistakes. After the discussion with my student, I found that the problem of his grammar relates to his educational background.*

Another supervisor commented in an angry voice that the student should know his job to write well and to know the supervisors' job. She said:

> *The Jordanian students I supervised believed that the supervisor's role is to check their work concerning grammar and other factors. They do not know the supervisors' role exactly, which makes a big mistake in their views. Students should submit good work to their supervisors so that supervisors can guide them in their process of writing.*

The same view was given by supervisor 6, who believed that Jordanian students had a grammatical problem writing their Ph.D. He said:

> *My Jordanian student had a problem with his writing; he always made a mistake in grammar. I think it is because of his educational background, as described by my student, and he is not a native speaker.*

Eight out of nine supervisors claimed that Jordanian Ph.D. candidates have problems with grammar such as tenses, prepositions, and punctuation marks. The researchers believed that the weakness of grammar that Jordanian Ph.D. students have is due to their educational background. The main reason for their problem is that in Jordan English is a required course for both schools (private and public), but the problem is with the hours given for the course which is 6 hours per week, which is not enough for EFL learners. The second problem is that teachers teach English with the help of the Arabic language (Almatarneh et al., 2018). The researchers of this study summarized supervisors' samples of students' grammatical mistakes. See table 2.

Table 2. Grammatical Mistakes

	Grammatical Mistakes	Occurrences
1	Problem with tenses	8
2	Lack of reporting verbs	7
3	Incorrect usage of subject-verb agreement	7
4	Misuse of punctuation marks	6
5	Misuse of articles	4
6	Incorrect capitalization	3
7	Misspelling	2

Lack of Vocabulary

Jordanian students remarked that one of the major issues they face is lack of vocabulary as a result of their insufficient vocabulary drills at school. Supervisor 8 said that her supervisee is not familiar with the meaning of some words, which makes the words difficult for the student to understand the situation and quite hard to write perfectly. She said:

> *My Jordanian student has a problem with his vocabularies. He does not know how to use the right words or reporting verbs in different situations. In this case his work was not up to Ph.D. level.*

This same point is brought up by another supervisor. Supervisor 1 announced that both of her Jordanian Ph.D. candidates had writing issues. They are unable to write, as she says, since their dissertations contain easy and non-academic terms. She said:

> *My Jordanian students' writing causes me a headache all the time. They use informal vocabularies, which makes their writing weak. I tried to make them better in writing, and here we are now.*

Using reported verbs is quite important in writing, but Jordanian candidates rarely use them. That is because Jordanian students rarely write in English at their undergraduate level. Supervisor 4 described his Jordanian student by saying that

> *My Jordanian student uses few reporting verbs in his writing, while there are hundreds of words he can play with. For example, he used the verbs (say and note) in his dissertation, when he could use other verbs to make his writing stronger. This is one of his problems.*

Personal Effects

Personal effects mean the social character of the scholarly writing. Regarding this issue, Jordanian Ph.D. students showed their behavior or interaction with their supervisors as it is. Supervisors thought that Jordanian Ph.D. students like to argue with their supervisors. Jordanian Ph.D. students are known for arguing with their supervisors, according to their supervisors. Supervisor one, who supervised two Jordanian Ph.D. candidates at UUM, provided one example. Both candidates argued with their supervisor about a few points, despite the fact that their work did not meet supervisors' requirements and their language was far from Ph.D. level. She said:

> *From my own experience, while supervising Ph.D. students, I found that students whom I have supervised argue a lot. They just prefer to argue on points without understanding. Having an idea is a good point, but they have to listen well to their supervisors' suggestions. The second problem is based on time. Supervising Ph.D. students with other responsibilities causes a delay in giving feedback so that students might be frustrated with delaying works. At the same time, students can help their supervisors while reading their work, if their work is written correctly without grammatical mistakes, and organizing ideas. The third problem is the language. Supervisors feel disappointed if the students are weak in using the language, which leads to a weak process of the dissertation. I faced such problems with my students, especially Jordanians.*

The same point has been raised by Supervisor 9, who declared that Jordanian Ph.D. students like to argue without understanding. She said:

> *My students have a problem with their arguments. They want to follow a procedure of research without studying a lot and justify their choices. The reason might be that they have never written a thesis before.*

Lack of Motivation

Motivation plays a significant role in the learning of English as a foreign language. Motivation is defined by Harboe and Müllen (2007, p7) as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language." In this study, some supervisors believed that Jordanian candidates lack the motivation to continue writing their Ph.D. dissertation. Supervisor 2 mentioned that both of his Jordanian students are less motivated to continue writing their Ph.D. dissertation. He said:

Both of my Jordanian students lack the motivation to write, I think. That is because they have a low level of English. They cannot immediately understand the concept or specific details; that is why I can feel they are less motivated compared with Asian Ph.D. candidates.

Another supervisor claimed that his student, who is ready to sit for the Viva voce (Latin for by live voice) VIVA session, was not motivated to continue writing his Ph.D. dissertation. She said:

For my Jordanian student, I discovered that he does not understand his topic; he does not like to keep studying the topic that he chose by himself. In some cases, we made an argument on what he wrote, but he cannot understand it. I think he is not motivated because of the topic he is working on.

Writing Apprehension

Writing apprehension (WA) is considered a problem for all learners, affecting the writers' performance. WA is defined by (Daly & Miller, 1975, p. 11) as "A subjective complex of attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral interaction which reinforces each other." Thus, the level of WA is divided into three levels: high, moderate, and low level (Daly & Miller, 1975). Furthermore, writing apprehension may influence students at all levels even after graduating from university (Hanna, 2010). Students with a high level of writing might prefer to delay their work or avoid writing at all because of the fear of evaluation or assessment (Hanna, 2010). WA was quite obvious among Jordanian Ph.D. candidates. Several supervisors mentioned that their students feel afraid to be evaluated. Supervisor 6 said that his student was highly anxious. He said:

I have noticed that my Jordanian student feels afraid more than other students. He is afraid of my comments and the examiners' comments. I try hard to decrease his feeling, but it is useless.

Supervisor 8 had the same view as supervisor 6 on the fear of evaluation. She said:

Late to submit works was a bit common. Once I asked him why you are late submitting your work, his answer was that he was afraid of my negative comments. In Jordanian culture, they never get a direct critique as we do in Malaysia. That was his answer.

The Problem with Generic Dissertation Structure

The generic dissertation structure was also a problem for some of the Jordanian Ph.D. candidates. They have several problems regarding writing a thesis, such as writing a problem statements, understanding the research method in general, the way to write the literature review, and other parts of the thesis. The reasons behind such problems might be related to their educational background, as most Jordanian students in their master's level do not write a thesis, they set for a comprehensive exam. The first supervisor said:

Both of my Jordanian Ph.D. students are weak in understanding what research methods mean. They need to work hard to keep reading to produce a good paper. In addition, they are weak in writing their problem statement and literature review. Through a discussion with them, my students declared that they faced such problems because they have never written a thesis before.

Discussion

The findings of this research, as illustrated above, can be summarized by six main themes which are grammatical mistakes, lack of vocabulary and verbs reporting, personal effects, lack of motivation, writing apprehension, and generic dissertation structure. The researchers discussed the findings accordingly.

The first theme that emerged from this research is grammatical mistakes. It was clearly mentioned by the supervisors that Jordanian Ph.D. students at UUM faced problem in grammar while writing their dissertation. Similar findings on both (Jordanian undergraduate and postgraduate students) were found. Studies showed similar results with the findings given above (Huwari, 2014; Huwari, et al., 2017). They state that grammatical errors are one of the most problematic issues that Jordanian students face when they write in English. Meanwhile, this study showed that Jordanian Ph.D. students have also faced the same problem in writing even though they are studying abroad because Jordanian Ph.D. students shared the same educational background with other participants of other Jordanian studies. Among Ph.D. studies, the result of this study is similar to a study done by Casanave and Hubbard (1992) on L2 Ph.D. candidates by saying that grammatical mistakes have occurred in both studies frequently.

The second theme that emerged from the study is lack of vocabularies and verbs reporting. Such a problem among Jordanian Ph.D. students is due to the fact that students have less amount of vocabulary in English, as they quite rarely write in English at their undergraduate level. Meanwhile, other studies mentioned in the literature review, such as Casanave and Hubbard (1992); in their results, state that their participants do not have problems with vocabulary. The students have enough vocabularies, and this allows them to write a good dissertation.

The third theme is personal effects. Based on the researchers' knowledge, no research has discussed Jordanian personal effects in depth. Thus, the researchers came across Al-Ahmad's (2003) study on Egyptian students who shared the

same culture with Jordanian, as both nations are Arab, their countries are close to each other, and they have shared the same language as well. In his study, he found that socio-cultural knowledge is a critical issue for teachers and their students at the university level.

The result of this study is quite similar to Huwari (2014) and Huwari's et al. (2017) studies. In their studies, the sampling was Jordanian students at different levels showing that Jordanian students have less motivation to write in English. Further research is needed to show the causes behind such a problem. Besides, Al-Khasawneh (2010) discovered in his study that Arab postgraduate students at UUM are less motivated to write their dissertation due to several reasons, such as their proficiency in the language and their interests.

In the Jordanian context, researchers found that students at different stages have a high level of writing apprehension. Huwari and Hashima (2011) found that Jordanian postgraduate students at UUM have a high level of WA because students are weak in English structure and academic writing, the have negative confidence in writing, and their experience. Other studies, such as Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012), on Jordanian undergraduate students at Yarmouk University also found that students have a high level of WA because students feel afraid from evaluation.

The findings of this research were divided into six themes which are grammatical mistakes, lack of vocabulary and verbs reporting, personal effects, lack of motivation, writing apprehension, and problem with generic dissertation structure. The findings are quite similar to other studies such as Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) who stated that students might face difficulties writing a Ph.D. dissertation due to the background knowledge of the dissertation genre and its parts, such as literature review. For example, students in their study often wrote irrelevant information in the literature. They missed reading and following the instruction of writing a dissertation. They do not respect the time given by the supervisors on the feedback given; they do not understand the supervisors' role. In the Jordanian context, other research such as Huwari et al. (2017) found that Jordanian postgraduate students at Yarmouk University faced the problem with organizing their dissertation. Students did not write the parts of the thesis accurately. They have a problem with writing the introduction section. The participants in this study admitted that they did not know precisely what they were supposed to write in the introduction. Further research is needed to discuss the causes behind these problems among Jordanian postgraduate students.

To summarize, the fundamental cause of these difficulties is a lack of academic understanding in language and technique, as demonstrated by several studies (Bamgboje-Ayodele et al., 2016; Lei & Hu, 2019; Mouton, 2001; Pyhältö et al., 2012). Research technique and academic English are the two most important qualities required of Ph.D. Arab applicants. Because the candidates are not native English speakers, English language remains a major issue for them. This is consistent with the findings of several previous investigations (Clavero, 2010; Hyland, 2019). Participants even believe that they must obtain extensive criticism on their academic work from their supervisors. Supervisors, on the other hand, are more concerned with the content than the language aspect. As a result, there is a need for a solution to this problem, such as having a co-supervisor who is accountable for the applicants' academic writing.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the supervisors' perspectives of writing dissertations among Jordanian Ph.D. candidates who are studying abroad. The study's objective is the Malaysian supervisors' perspectives of Jordanian Ph.D. candidates' problems when writing their dissertation. Nine Malaysian supervisors who supervised 21 Jordanian Ph.D. candidates were interviewed for this qualitative case study. The findings of this research are discussed in six themes. The first theme is grammatical mistakes. It is one of the most problematic issues for Jordanian students. Most of the supervisors participated in this study agreed that Jordanian students faced such a problem. The types of grammatical mistakes made by Jordanian Ph.D. students are problems with tenses, lack of verbs reporting, subject-verb agreement, punctuation marks, misused articles, capitalization, and spelling. The main reason behind having grammatical mistakes in their writing is their educational background. The second theme is the lack of vocabulary and reporting verbs mentioned by seven supervisors out of nine. Having such a problem among Jordanian Ph.D. students is due to the fact that students have less amount of vocabulary in English, as they rarely write in English at their undergraduate level. The third theme is personal effects. The fourth theme is lack of motivation. In this regard, many supervisors participated in this study thought that Jordanian students are less motivated than other students due to their low language proficiency. The fifth theme is writing apprehension. Students with a low level of writing might prefer to procrastinate their work or avoiding writing at all because of the fear of evaluation or assessment. The sixth theme is the problem with generic dissertation structure which means that Jordanian students have difficulties writing their thesis in a good manner; they are unable to write their introduction, problem statement, literature review and other parts of the thesis. The findings of this study have added new information to the existing literature. As this research is the only one which is discussed Jordanian PhD students, who are studying abroad in Malaysia, problems when they write their dissertation/thesis in English.

Recommendations

The following instructional implications are explored based on the conclusion and suggestions of the students' performance in writing their Ph.D. thesis.

1. Supervisors should help students enhance their writing skills by requiring them to attend seminars and write more.

2. Supervisors should encourage students to practice utilizing current writing strategies such as paraphrasing and note-taking methods that strengthen the student's thinking.

Limitations

The researchers of this study recommend four points which are:

1. Based on the researchers' knowledge, no research has been done on supervisors perspectives' of writing a dissertation among Jordanian Ph.D. candidates who are studying abroad. That is why there is not much data on this issue. There is a need to have more research on supervisors' perspectives of Jordanian students and look out for the causes and the effects of such issues.

2. The Jordanian students in this study were male students only because there were no female Jordanian Ph.D. students in the period of data collection studying at UUM. The results would be more generalizable if both sexes were included in the study. There is a need for more studies on both genders to compare their findings.

3. The data collection of this study was interviewing the supervisors only, while there is a need to look at the topic from the students' perspectives. More studies are needed to discover the topic using quantitative research.

4. The Jordanian Ph.D. theses of the candidates are comprised at various stages of the research process. Some were from 'early' work and some from 'nearly completed' theses. Further research is needed to compare the supervisors' perspectives at early and later stages of the supervision process. It is possible that what supervisors comment on and how they frame their comments may change over time.

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Authorship Contribution Statement

O.M.A. Hawari: Designed the study, written the protocol, analyzed and, interpreted the data. Al-Shboul: Managed the literature review, and the methodology part. I. Huwari has collected the data by interviewing the supervisors and produced the initial draft of the analysis. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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